

PUBLIC LIBRARIES OF SAGINAW MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY

The Public Libraries of Saginaw maintains a central information center and a person responsible for the coordination of public information to maintain proactive media relations. The Assistant to the Director has primary responsibility for media relations.

1. **Releasing Information:** The Assistant to the Director is responsible for ensuring that library information released to the news media is accurate and distributed in a timely manner. She is responsible for coordinating responses to media inquiries and promoting library services/programs through the media.
2. **Library Spokespersons:** The Library Board President, Director and the Assistant to the Director are the official spokespersons for the Public Libraries of Saginaw.
3. **Requests for Interviews:** The Assistant to the Director should be notified of all media requests for interviews as soon as possible, preferably within a half hour of the request. She will evaluate the request and authorize the staff member who received the request to do the interview or determine who else is best qualified to do the interview.

Whenever possible, requests for media interviews about library services will be answered by a Department Head or library staff member who is responsible for providing those services.

All requests for interviews will be handled on a timely basis.

Unscheduled Interviews (Television & Radio): Contact the Assistant to the Director or the Library's Business Office for advice and support. The Department Head or library staff member in charge of the building will be responsible for working with the media personnel. If the issue is not controversial, the staff member may give interviews or answer the reporters questions as needed.

4. **Emergency Situations:** In emergency situations, every effort should be made to have the Library Director, Assistant to the Director, Associate Director, Department Head or staff member in charge of the building respond to the media.

Current Contact Numbers

	wk.	home
Marcia Warner	755-9833	798-0793
Sherrill Smith	755-9822	791-3889
Business Office	755-9833	

5. **Record Keeping:** The Assistant to the Director and the Library's Business Office staff are responsible for keeping a clip file of library related stories in print and electronic formats (if available) and copies of news releases.

PUBLIC RELATIONS TECHNIQUES

1. Be proactive and plan your message to the media.
 - a. Know the message you want to get across and make those positive points first in a clear, brief statement. Prioritize your message. Three to five main points generally make a strong focused interview.

Have printed backup materials available, if possible, to give to the reporter with background information – for example a brochure, flyer or press release, written statistics, etc.
 - b. Use good examples or stories to illustrate your message, but be careful of breaching the confidentiality of library users in any way.
 - c. Think about some controversial questions or issues that might come up and how you might handle them.
 - d. Be human. Show the interviewer that you care and are genuinely interested and concerned about the public that we serve.
 - e. Remember that you are a library spokesperson. Be careful about personal opinions on topics and do not make negative comments about library staff, users or services.
 - f. Answer questions that relate to your professional responsibilities with the library. If questions go beyond that scope, tactfully let the reporter know that you will need to have someone else respond to that question. Contact the Assistant to the Director or the library's Business Office for further help.
 - g. Don't fake it. If you do not know the answer, say so, and then take steps to get what the reporters need.
 - h. Nothing is ever "off the record."
2. Respond on a timely basis
 - a. Make media requests a priority. Find out deadlines and make every effort to respond on a timely basis.
 - b. Return media calls promptly to find out what they want, even if you feel you will not be handling the interview.

3. Looking and sounding good
 - a. Television and radio reporters want short soundbites that have punch. Think about how to say your message in a brief and quotable way.
 - b. Stay cheerful, calm and positive. Remember – you have something to say that people are interested in. You’re the local expert.
 - c. Take enough time to think before you speak. Let the reporter rush, not you.
 - d. Use lots of eye contact.
 - e. Don’t argue. When confronted with questions that seem false or misleading, use phrases like “I’d like to clear up any misunderstanding. What we really do is...”
 - f. Plain, darker colors and uncluttered neckline look best on television.